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Ukraine-Kazakhstan: Evolving Strategic Nuclear Policies 2

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UKRAINE-KAZAKHSTAN:

Evolving Strategic Nuclear Policies

CIS nuclear states may sign an agreement on removing strategic nuclear weapons from their territories, but Ukraine and Kazakhstan continue to suggest that Western security guarantees may be needed.

President Nazarbayev told a Western journalist on Tuesday that Kazakhstan will not sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a nonnuclear state, Nonetheless, he said Kazakhstan will not need nuclear weapons if the US guarantees to protect Alma-Ata from Russia and China. He also said Kazakhstan will observe the START Treaty and support CIS control over nuclear weapons, but he complained that the US is not pressing India to join the NPT.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Kravchuk has said Ukraine, Byelarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia will soon sign an agreement to eliminate CIS strategic weapons, according to Western press reports. His adviser indicated that many problems remain in removing and destroying nuclear weapons, however, and that Western help is needed. Recent polling suggests that only about one-fourth of the population wants Kiev to have its own nuclear force.

Comment: Kravchuk's announcement probably was intended to calm Western concerns that Kiev may renege on its nuclear-free commitment, thereby threatening START ratification. Both Kazakhstan and Ukraine recently have suggested that they would become nuclear-free states if the West provides security guarantees. Both countries believe that their negotiating leverage—both with Russia and the West—will decline sharply after nuclear weapons are removed. Nazarbayev—whose position appears to have hardened in the past month—and Kravchuk probably will drive a hard bargain with Moscow on the timetable for removing strategic weapons; both states will try to keep some weapons, at least until the end of the decade.